Numb. 45.

MERCATOR:

OR,

Commerce Retrieved.

From Thurſday, September 3. to Saturday, September 5. 1713.

The Treaty of Commerce hard upon the French, *and ought to be oppoſed by none, but what do it on the* French *Account.*
The French *take off Duties, Ours remain; the* French *bound,* Britain *left free.*
The Treaty with France *left wholly to the Parliament; the Treaty with* Portugal *cramm'd down the Parliament's Throat.*
The Treaty with Portugal *void in its own Nature, becauſe illegal and againſt the Conſtitution.*
The Deſign againſt the Miniſtry (in the Oppoſition made againſt this Treaty) very weak and fooliſh.
It can be no Damage to the Miniſtry, whether we accept this Treaty or no.
But the Loſs is to Trade, and the Britiſh *Manufactures.*

WHAT the laſt *MERCATOR* briefly concluded with, cannot be ſo lightly paſs'd over, (viz.) The Severity of the Treaty of Commerce on the Part of France, and the Latitude left on the Part of our Country, and how hard we ſhould have thought it to have taken the Alternative: Take it over again, that thoſe People, who are made to believe ſuch ſtrange things of this Treaty, may be diſabuſed.

All the high Duties upon our Goods in France, back to the Year 1664, except in the four Species, which have been already deſcribed, are to be taken off.

All the high Duties in Britain, which have been laid on ſince 1664, may remain as they are, only provided other Nations pay the ſame.

NOTE. So that the Parliament is not obliged to take off any Duties at all, if they think but fit to lay the ſame Duties on the like Goods from other Parts.

Again. The French King is obliged, not only to take off all the ſaid high Duties from our Goods; but he is obliged never to lay on any more Duties upon the ſaid Goods.

On the other hand, Britain is at Liberty not only not to take off any of the high Duties on French Goods, as above; but is at full Liberty to lay on any other or farther Duties on the French Goods, even to a Prohibition if they think fit.

It would aſtoniſh an impartial Mind to ſee, what Uſage a Treaty ſo every way contrived as well for the Honour as the Intereſt of Great-Britain meets with; what Reception it finds among a Party, who by the Treaties they did make and were about to make, diſcovered, that they had made no ſuch Proviſion for either; witneſs their Portugal Treaty, where they preſumed by the Authority of a ſingle Ambaſſador, to limit the Parliament of England in the great and fundamental Right of Laying and Taking-off Taxes, and thereby gave up the Privilege of Parliament to the Prerogative.

Where they preſumed to agree with the King of Portugal, that for the future, ſuch and ſuch Duties only ſhould be laid on his Wines, and ſuch and ſo much ſhould be laid on the French Wines, and that the Parliament ſhould not alter it.

If it be true, as no doubt it is, that no Man can depute to another more Power than he himſelf poſſeſſes, and that every Action done by a Subject illegal and inconſiſtent with the Rights of the whole, is void in its own Nature; then the Portugal Treaty is abſurd, directly contrary to the Conſtitution, illegal and void in its ſelf: Nor could the Powers granted to the Agent or Ambaſſador, who made the ſaid Treaty, empower or enable him to ſign ſuch a Treaty; and there needs no Law to cenſure it, for it is it ſelf againſt Law, and therefore void of it ſelf.

And is this the Treaty, which our Oppoſers would have be kept ſo ſacred? A Treaty, which the Parliament may more juſtly Impeach the Makers of for betraying the Conſtitution of their Country, than give any Sanction to; for if that way of making Treaties may be allowed, and the preſent Miniſtry had not been more tender of the Liberties of their Country than thoſe, who ſuffered that Treaty to be paſs'd, they had no occaſion to have brought this preſent Treaty to be canvaſſed and refuſed in the Houſe, much leſs to be mob'd and cenſured out of the Houſe; but, on the contrary, might have finiſh'd and ſign'd it, and have called it a ſacred Treaty, which the Parliament have no Power to violate, as the other ſay of the Treaty with Portugal.

Thus the Parliament is in a fair way to be made a Noſe of Wax, a uſeleſs needleſs thing; and the Miniſters of State, if the Portugal Treaty may but be allowed for a Precedent, may lay on and take off what Duties and Cuſtoms, and by the ſame Rule what Taxes they pleaſe, and the Queen need not put us to the Trouble of any more Parliaments.

But the preſent Miniſtry have acted on another Principle; and being by the Treaty to come to the taking off Prohibitions and additional Taxes from ſome parts of the French Trade, far from ſtipulating poſitively, that it ſhould be done, as thoſe People, who made the Portugal Treaty did; as if there was no Parliament to be conſulted in the caſe. They took care to leave it all to be made EFFECTUAL by the Parliament, at the ſame time binding the French King faſt to perform all his part, whenever we think fit to perform ours: So that the French were bound, and the Britiſh were left free.

Can any thing be more for the Honour of the Britiſh Nation abroad? Can any thing be more for the Honour of the Britiſh Parliament at home? Could any Miniſtry act with more difference to the Conſtitution, and with more regard to Parliamentary Authority, altho' they had ſuch an unwarrantable precedent before them?

And

And what do these People mean, who in Opposing this Treaty think they affront the Ministry? What Folly is this? It is true it may have something of Ingratitude to her Majesty's Care for the Publick Good; a very fashionable Crime! and it may be unjust to the Ministry, to Reproach them with making a Treaty to the Disadvantage of their Country, when the contrary thereof is so evidently made appear: But as to any Hurt this can do the Ministry, it seems the absurdest Expectation imaginable; for what is it to the Ministers of State, any farther, than as they desire the Good of their Country, whether you will accept the Trade to France or no? Have they done any more than proposed Terms for you, and Honourably for Britain, tyed the French King's Hands to perform them, if you agree to it; leaving the British Nation entirely free, to take or leave? If we find the Trade to our Advantage, as we must, if we are awake, there is the Treaty fixt, and the French bound, if not, we are Free; and what is all this to the Ministry? Or which way are they affected with it, on one Side or other, that so much Clamour is raised about it, and all the Strength of our Parties engaged in it?

The *MERCATOR* professes, that the Ministers of State espousing this Treaty, and endeavouring to Disabuse the poor People about it, that it may be made Effectual to their Advantage; seems to be the most undeniable Testimony of their Sincere Affection to and Concern for their Country's Good, that can possibly be given; seeing it is otherwise perfectly indifferent to them, as a Ministry, whether you will accept the Treaty or no: What is it to the Ministers, what Damage accrues to the Woollen Manufacture, to the Employment of the Poor, or to the Good of Trade, other than as they have the general Good at their Hearts? What Hurt can it be to the Ministers, if the Parliament shall think fit to block up the French Trade, nay, if they block up all our Trade? The Ministry have done their part, they may wash their Hands of the Consequences; and tho' they may pity our Madness and Folly, they can receive no Injury by it in their Persons or Interests; the Damage is to the Nation, to our Trade, to our Posterity; and, it is to be doubted, Posterity will feel that Damage, if we should lose the Bill again, more than we imagine.

How Vain then is the making this Bill or Treaty, a Test of our Parties! a Shibboleth for our Elections! and an occasion of Tumult and Clamour! If they Essay thereby to hurt the Ministry, they act the most inconsistent part in the World; since the Damage is all their own, and not at all affects the Ministry, be it one way or other.

All the Ministry have to desire in it, is, that Men would duly weigh and consider the true Interest of their Country, that they may not Ruin the Commerce of Britain, to carry on their private Party-Interests; and then say, they were mistaken; that they would have a Care how they point the Arrows, which they think they shoot at the Ministry, and may wound their Country. This it may be too late to repent of, when hereafter they shall say they thought it had been otherwise; and that they would not suffer themselves to be Imposed upon by false Notions, wrong Calculations, and contrived Delusions, to the Damage of themselves, and of the Trade of this Kingdom.

As there is really no Reason to fear, but the People of Britain will be able to do thus, and that the wicked Designs of those, who would Impose upon them, to act against themselves, shall be Defeated: So it was necessary thus to State things before them, that they might see, what Reason they have to act thus; and this is all the Concern the Government can have in this Matter, to whom it is of no private Consequence in the least, which way soever it shall go; and therefore those, who expect to raise Mischief from it to the Publick Management, would be effectually disappointed, altho' they should succeed in the rest of their Design; which however, for the sake of the British Commerce, it is the Wish of all Honest Men, that they may not.

But to return to the Treaty it self, and that part of it, which respects the several Duties upon French Goods.

It was observed, that this Treaty has been made with so much Wisdom and Caution, for the Advantage of the British Interest, that a Power is still left in the British Parliament, to lay on any higher Duties on any Species of Goods coming from France, if those, which are laid by this Act, are not thought sufficient to restrain and lessen the Importation: At the same time, the like Freedom is not left to the French King, who is obliged not to lay any other, or higher Duties on our Goods in France, than are left on by this Treaty.

Besides the Advantage this gives to Britain, as aforesaid, the Mercers and Weavers would in a particular manner be satisfied with this part of the Treaty. If they would do Justice in the Case, and would acknowledge that room is left here for the British Parliament effectually to exclude not a large Quantity of French Silks only, but any wrought Silks at all from being Imported into Great-Britain for the time to come, either from France, or from any other Country: So that if at any time hereafter they should find the French wrought Silks, notwithstanding this present Tax or Duty of 12 s. per Pound should come in too fast upon them, to the prejudice of the Silk Manufacture of Britain; they have no more to do, but to represent the same to the Parliament, and they may double or treble the said Duties, as they shall see cause: This Treaty, no way limiting them in that Case, save only, that the said Addition be general to other Nations Goods, as well as to the French. And it would be very hard to tell us, what is the Inconvenience or Injustice of making it so general.

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